

Blackmar, H.C.
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Sp. Fandango
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(2a)

H. C. BLACKMAR'S

PRACTICAL BANJO METHOD



BANJO AND GUITAR MUSIC.

PHILADELPHIA, PA.:

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3247
Guita

SPANISH FANDANCO.

Arranged by H.C. BLACKMAR.

Tune Bass to B.

BANJO.

FINE

Harmonics
12th Fret.

7th fret.

7th fret.

5th fret.

Harmonics
12th Fret.

7th Fret.

7th Fret.

5th Fret.

EMMETT'S LULLABY.

12th Position barre.

9th barre

5th barre

10th barre

12th barre

BANJO.

p

XVI

X VII

Harmonics.
V IV V

Harmonics.
VII

5th
4th
String

pp

rit e dim.

morendo.

16th barre.

THE BANJO SCIENTIFICALLY.

What is there in a banjo to write about? How is that bright, effective tone produced? Let us glance at the instrument before us. A circular frame, called the rim, composed of the alloy known as German silver, inside of which is a second frame or rim of wood. The edges are turned round a wire resting upon the edge of the wooden hoop. Over this frame, or double rim, is stretched a membranous skin, highly strained and held in its place by a hoop of metal, with a complete system of braces and adjustable hooks for tightening the head at pleasure. A neck is fitted to the rim. There are five vibrating strings, four of which extend from the appendage known as the "tail-piece" over the skin or head to the extreme end of the neck. The fifth string is one-fourth shorter than the others, and is held by a peg at the side of the neck. The strings are tuned in the following manner: the third, or thickest gut string, to such a pitch as corresponds to the size of the instrument and consequent length of string; the second string a half higher, the first string a fifth higher, and the short string an eighth higher, producing when struck in unison a common chord—which is always composed of the first, third, fifth and eighth notes of the scale. The fourth, or wound-string, is tuned a half below the third string. It is thus possible to make all the notes from the wound-string open, or lowest notes of the instrument, to a compass of over three octaves, which is accomplished by pressing the strings to the finger-board at certain divisions known as frets.

The frets may be either raised above the surface of the finger-board or merely frets laid level with the board. With raised frets the tone produced is metallic and clanky, and, although it may answer very well for a short string, is not very pleasant to the ear when heard in a large instrument, as the strings are apt to rattle.

The frets upon the banjo produce the notes common to the modern tempered chromatic scale. With raised frets it becomes impossible to produce any effects or sounds which lie outside of these divisions, and which are often used on the smooth board by artists consisting of the "slide" and other effects. It is not generally known by banjoists that the modern chromatic scale is imperfect, according to the reasoning of learned writers upon the subject of acoustics, and that a sharp, properly speaking, is not the flat of the next note, but was made so by force of circumstances, as to produce a perfect scale would require over seventy notes to the octave. With these complicated matters our modern music has little to do. We recognize only twelve semitones within the octave. (It may be well, however, to state that the accordion does with a less number.) Returning to our subject—the membranous skin or head of the banjo acts as a sounding-board, and, being elastic, puts forth the sound-waves. The pitch of the instrument is not regulated by the tenacity of the head, as in the kettle-drum, for instance, but depends solely upon the strings. At the same time the timbre of the tone is greatly affected by the state of the head. When the head is loose or soft the tone is very much impaired, and becomes dull and lifeless, whereas when the head is tightly strained the tone is affected in directly the opposite degree.

Thus it had become, some time ago, an established idea that the head was the only point to be regulated in making a good-sounding instrument, but this is now an exploded idea, as a banjo, to meet the requirements of an expert or artist, has got to be constructed perfectly throughout, as well as to have a good head upon it. Many have thought that any banjo could be made perfect by putting on a good head, and were doomed to disappointment and the loss of their investment in a worthless instrument. Let those who continue to think so try for themselves.

The rim of the banjo constitutes the "sounding-frame;" upon this outside of the head, the power and quality of the tone entirely depend. The great secret lies in the maker's native genius and experience in selecting such wood of known acoustic properties for the rim as will produce the quality of sound desired. This is combined with the natural "ring" in the metal, which, being added to the pure sound produced from the wood, one uniting with the other, gives a tone which is a combination of sound-waves. Hence this quality of tone cannot be produced from a wooden frame alone, nor from a metal frame alone. It was long ago the custom of the old masters in violin-making to sound their wood before using it in their instruments. This point requires long and careful study. Felix, the distinguished French writer upon musical subjects, says that a piece of well figured maplewood of certain dimensions taken from the back of a violin made by Stradivarius in the year 1717 produced the note A sharp. Another piece of plain maple from another violin of the same master, made in 1708, gave precisely the same note. A rod of deal taken from the top of a violin of the same maker, made in 1724, produced the note F; another rod of deal from an instrument of the same master, made in 1690, gave the same note; and a third rod of deal obtained from another instrument of this celebrated maker, made in 1730, also gave the same note.

That all woods yield a sound no one can doubt. The specific sonorosity of wood was already known at the period when the great Cremona masters made their violins. The ancient Cremona masters preferred maple and pine to any other woods.

It has been proven by experiments made on various woods whose appearance was the same that they yield diversities of sound and vary greatly in pitch from a third, a fourth, or even more. Hence two rims may be made of the same wood and be entirely different in their sound.

The neck or handle of the banjo itself has more influence upon the tone than in almost any other instrument, being longer and thicker in proportion.

It often happens that a banjo turns out good merely by chance, as nearly all makers succeed in producing a good one occasionally, but are utterly bohemian in producing duplicates of the same. The long and hard study necessary to success in this enterprise has deterred many from extending the work.

There are many patented banjos on the market for sale, and the most of them are so bad that the very fact of an instrument of this kind being on a patent creates a prejudice against it at once. The "patent banjo" is ridiculed by nearly all players.

When you buy a new banjo you will find that during the first few days the head will require tightening. Every Stewart Banjo has sent with it, attached to the instrument, a wrench or key to fit the nuts on the hooks of same.

Be sure to pull the head tight before you make a test of your instrument.

The rim or circular frame of the banjo may be called its sounding-frame. This sounding-frame must respond to the pulsations of the head and vibration of the strings. The tighter the head is strained the more perfect this response. A good banjo may be made to sound poorly by having on it a poor or even a slack head, but a good head will in no case transform a "tub" or poor instrument into a really good one, although it may tend to improve it. A good instrument, such as must be had by all good players, must be perfect in all its parts, and cannot afford to have any weak points. Nobody who owned a gun would consider it a perfect weapon of defense if he was constantly in fear of its missing fire just at the time it was expected to go off. Neither would a perfect marksman be content with a gun which was defective in any way. No owner of a watch would consider he had a perfect timepiece merely because it possessed a handsome case. A handsome case would be of little avail to a man who wanted to catch a train at a certain minute, and had only his watch to guide him, if the works were so imperfect as to cause it to stop just at the time he most needed it. Just so with the artistic banjo player; he does not want a tricky, uncertain banjo, changing with every change of the weather. Nor does he want to possess a banjo which is so "hard playing" or difficult to execute upon that it is torture to play upon it. An artist, when he buys a banjo, does not care to send to a manufacturer of little experience, who perhaps may turn out a good instrument now and then, but he must needs go to a maker who, from long study and extended experience, can turn out a perfect instrument in every way adapted to the wants of the expert player. Hence the unbounded success and popularity of the Stewart Banjos among professional and amateur artists.

Another matter worthy of consideration is the repair of a banjo consequent upon hard or rough usage, or damages by casualty. Do not entrust your instrument to a "botch," or an unprincipled rival, for repairs. Many banjos are greatly injured by unprincipled persons who have been trusted to repairing them. Keep your banjo head well stretched and tight, and if it breaks it is better to let it break and get a good one that will stand the strain. Never loosen up the head to prevent its breaking; this is a sure way to make a broken banjo. The same rule applies to bridges. They should not be slackened up after use, but always kept up to pitch. It is well, however, to remove the bridge when not in use. When you let down the bridge always first remove the outer strings from the notches to avoid splitting the bridge or wearing out the notches.

The beautiful blending of the chords in the Stewart Banjos, so that they may be distinguished for a considerable distance, has given these banjos the reputation for their wonderful CARRYING TONE. The musician always notices this point at once—hear the success of these instruments over all others. Those who have heard Stewart's famous ORCHESTRA BANJO are forced to admit that the tone contains a principal or quality never before attained in a banjo. These banjos are as well known to all European artists as they are here in America.

UNUSUALLY FINE BANJO.

As I give my entire attention to the making of fine Banjos, and being considered an EXPERT IN BANJOS, having made instruments for the most celebrated and experienced players, such as HORACE WESTON, WM. A. HUNTLEY, GEORGE POWERS, JAS. SANFORD and other famous players who use my Banjos exclusively, I am pleased to give my personal attention to all orders. Those requiring instruments of particular merits find it cheaper to deal with me than elsewhere, as I have never furnished a Banjo to an experienced player that did not turn out exactly as I represented, and my long experience enables me to safely guarantee satisfaction, as I understand what is wanted and know how to supply it.

I frequently succeed in producing Banjos of *exceptionally fine tone*, and by taking these instruments to my residence, and devoting my evenings to playing upon and developing the same, it often happens that I have on hand such a Banjo as many a player of experience would give an extra price to possess. These Banjos I make generally of *twelve or thirteen* inch rim, with *nineteen* inch finger-board, and the prices vary from \$50 to \$100 each, including leather case with each instrument. Should you desire to secure an instrument perfect in register of tone, and of really

extra merit, it would be well to write me, stating what you desire; but I cannot promise to hold a rare instrument of this kind for any length of time without a deposit.

An ordinary player or a beginner is unable to appreciate a good Banjo, as they have not the trained musical ear which makes them competent judges, and such players are probably as well suited with any ordinary Banjo at a much cheaper price.

But I am addressing this to those who are seeking for such an instrument as I describe, the prices of which are charged with respect to TONE QUALITIES over and above the consideration of fine material and beautiful finish, which all my finer grade instruments possess. These Banjos are made with dots on side of neck to designate frets (professional frets), as raised frets are not recommended in large instruments, and are put in only to order. The necks on such Banjos are always made of several pieces of wood glued together, which makes them more costly to manufacture but of five times the ordinary strength, and will never warp, besides making a beautifully finished piece of work.

Address, S. S. STEWART,
223 Church Street, Philadelphia, Pa.